

March 25, 2009
Contact Jim Hubbard
(202) 225-2671

*Time is Now for Changes That Decrease Costs, Increase Coverage,
Improve Quality and Preserve Patient Choice*

NOTE: To view a transcript or video of Congressman Carnahan speaking on the House floor to mark *Covered the Uninsured Week* [click here](#).

(Washington, DC) - Congressman Russ Carnahan marked *Cover the Uninsured Week* (March 22-29) with a call for Missourians to get behind national efforts to enact comprehensive health care reform this year. Reforming the nation's health care system to lower costs, improve quality, increase coverage, and preserve patient choice is a top priority for Congress and President Barack Obama.

"Some naysayers claim that the President and Congress are doing too much too soon," said Congressman Carnahan.

"But we cannot fix our economy without fixing our broken health care system and that's why I mark Cover the Uninsured Week with a call to action, action to achieve comprehensive health care reform, not next year, not in 4 years, but this year."

The problem of the uninsured, and its impact on the entire health care system, continues to grow. The federal government estimates that over 45 million individuals lacked health insurance coverage of any kind during 2008. In Missouri the number of uninsured has grown to 750,218. Approximately \$56 billion in uncompensated care for the uninsured is absorbed annually by the health system, driving up the cost of insurance for everyone.

"Reforming health care will strengthen our middle class, help businesses create jobs and be competitive, rebuild the economy and put our Nation on a sound financial footing far into the future," said Carnahan. **"Now is the time for comprehensive health care reform."**

Congress has already acted this year to strengthen health coverage for lower income children and for workers who have lost their jobs during the economic recession. As one of its first acts of the year, Congress reauthorized the State's Children Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to expand coverage to 11 million children including 64,000 Missouri children. And in the face of a

recession with hundreds of thousands of Americans losing their jobs and their health insurance every month, Congress passed an economic recovery plan that provides temporary subsidies to help families maintain their health coverage through the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA).

Covered the Uninsured, a project by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is a national campaign to raise awareness about the number of Americans living without health insurance and make the case for reform that expands coverage.

###